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MAY 21 1895

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Château de Rochambeau.

...BY...

JOSEPH G. ROSENGARTEN.

READ BEFORE THE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY,
DECEMBER 21, 1894.

Reprinted from the Proc. Amer. Philos. Soc., Vol. xxxiii, January 16, 1895.

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PORTRAIT OF WASHINGTON,

By Charles Willson Peale,

AT THE CHATEAU DE ROCHAMBEAU.

Presented by Washington to General Comte de Rochambeau.

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The Château de Rochambeau.

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(*Read before the American Philosophical Society, December 21, 1894.*)

The home of La Fayette at La Grange has long been a point of attraction for many Americans, full of admiration for La Fayette and the part he played in the American Revolution. The story of his services in behalf of the struggling colonies, so well told by Mr. Charlemagne Tower, Jr., in his noteworthy contribution to our history of the Revolution, will undoubtedly strengthen and renew the strong affection always entertained in this country for La Fayette, so markedly exhibited during his lifetime, especially on his last visit to this country, and in the reception given to his descendants, who came here to join in the celebration of the centennial anniversary of the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown. In doing honor to La Fayette and to his countrymen for their help in securing American independence, we ought not to forget the Rochambeaus, father and son, the former the General-in-Chief of the French Allied Army sent to help the American colonies in their struggle against Great Britain, the son his Aid de-camp, who served with distinction, and was sent to France to secure that final help, fleet, men and money, with which the long war for Independence was brought to a successful termination by the closing and crowning victory. A recent visit to the Château de Rochambeau showed that it was full of interest for Americans, for there the present owner, the Marquis de Rochambeau, piously preserves the historical relics of the family, and prominent among them are those that marked the Comte de Rochambeau's leading part in the American War of Independence. The Château itself is of great interest. Situated on the banks of the Loire, between Blois and Vendôme, it is easily accessible, and a view of its fine grounds, its curious caves, its lovely outlook over the valley of the Loire, its noble avenue and the beautiful river, is of itself a delight to lovers of the picturesque.

In the Massachusetts Historical Society *Proceedings*, 1882-83, Vol. xx, p. 100, the late Hon. Robert C. Winthrop describes his then recent visit to the Château de Rochambeau, where he found many relics of the old Marquis and Count, as he then was, of Yorktown memory—the sword which he wore in America, his badge as an honorary member of the Cincinnati, his baton as a Marshal of France, with all his orders and decorations, and a portrait of himself, one of a large series of family portraits on the walls. On pedestals in the corners were two beautifully wrought miniature cannon, inscribed as having been presented to the widow of the old Marquis by Louis XVIII, to take the place of the two British cannon which Washington had presented to Rochambeau after the victory at Yorktown, which had been seized and probably recast during the French Revolution. In his bedroom was the original MS. of his *Memoirs* printed in

REPRINTED JAN. 16, 1895, FROM PROC. AMER. PHILOS. SOC. XXXIII. 146.

1809. Between the windows was a large portrait, one of Peale's original portraits of Washington, which had been presented by Washington himself to Rochambeau—a large square or three-quarters portrait, in military costume, with a cannon and other military emblems in the background—in perfect preservation and worthy of being included among the most notable of the numberless portraits of the Father of his Country.

A recent visitor, giving an account of the Château as he saw it in September last, in a letter printed in the Philadelphia *Ledger* of October 31, 1894, speaks of the fine suits of ancestral armor, worn by the Rochambeaus of the sixteenth century, around which are draped the American flags, presented by Gen. Hancock to the present owner, certainly an involuntary tribute by the *preux chevalier* of our own army to the prowess of these knights of old. He also was among those who on behalf of the Government of the United States welcomed the Marquis de Rochambeau as the leader of the French visitors of 1881, descendants of the gallant soldiers who had shared in the honors of the surrender at Yorktown. Thus the connection between the Rochambeau of our own Revolutionary War, and the Rochambeau of to-day, is one of the pleasant ties that keep alive the friendship of the two countries and make the United States and France sister republics. The Comte de Rochambeau left two volumes of *Memoirs*, published in Paris in 1809, edited by Leonce de Lancival, which tell the story of his life. Born at Vendôme July 1, 1725, and dying at the Château de Rochambeau on May 1, 1807, his long life was full of interesting experiences as a soldier, and the short episode of his services as Commander-in-Chief of the French Army sent to help Washington, is of itself enough to make him a man of note for all students of American history. He entered the French Army as Cornet in 1748, in Saint Simon's Regiment of Cavalry, and served with distinction in campaigns in Bohemia, Bavaria and on the Rhine; he was made Colonel in 1767, as a reward for his brilliant services at the siege of Namur, and Brigadier for his action at Minorca, and Major-General for his reorganization of the French Army. He served under Marshals Saxe and Richelieu and d'Estrée and de Broglie, who afterwards sent De Kalb to this country with an offer to become the General-in-Chief of the army in the impending struggle, a curious episode admirably told by Dr. Stille, the President of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Rochambeau himself tells us that "after the peace," it must have been about 1769, when he was stationed at Strasburg as Inspector of the French Infantry in Alsace, he advised the Hereditary Prince of Brunswick to go to America, and there play the part of William of Orange in England—make himself sovereign of a superb empire—but the Prince had no idea that the colonies could be united then, or for a long time to come. It was a curious coincidence that he should have served under Marechal de Broglie, who seriously hoped to play a leading part in America, and that Rochambeau himself should have led the French Army which did such signal service in helping America to achieve its independence, while the same Brunswick

Prince sent his soldiers, in the pay of Great Britain, to help prevent the colonies from establishing their independence. Rochambeau was a soldier, and he had no political aims and ambitions either here or at home. After his brilliant career in the French wars on the Continent, he gained fresh honor by his successful reorganization of the French Army in its short experience of peace, and as Governor of the Department of Normandy and Brittany, and as Inspector-General, showed great capacity. In 1778 he organized the force intended for a descent on the English coast, and after twenty years of hard service was made Lieutenant-General. He was appointed to the command of the corps intended to be sent to America, consisting of 4000 men, seven ships, and money and supplies for the struggling colonies—De Ternay was put in command of the naval force. Arrived at Newport, R. I., after a voyage of seventy days, he disembarked with his contingent, fortified his position, and later on met Washington at Hartford, and arranged the plan of the campaign that was to end with such signal honor. He sent his son and Aid-de-camp back to France, to procure additional men, and further needed help, and through the younger Rochambeau's vigorous presentation of the case, France was led to send more ships and more men and more money. Col. de Rochambeau returned in May with the satisfactory news of another fleet under De Grasse and six hundred more soldiers and a million and a half francs in coin. Colonial bills were then selling at forty per cent. discount, and much benefit was derived from a further sum of six million francs, which was put at Washington's disposition. The French War Office advised a movement northward to the Penobscot, Nova Scotia and Halifax, but fortunately and wisely left Rochambeau free to join and act with Washington, and it was he who suggested the movement to and operations in Virginia, and at the same time asked for more ships and men and money from the French forces serving in the West Indies.

The Continental currency was practically repudiated by Congress. On June 18, the French corps started to join Washington's Army on the Hudson, making in all a force of 9000 men, enough to keep Clinton in New York and bring Cornwallis to the coast. De Grasse brought from San Domingo Saint Simon's corps of 3000 men and 1,200,000 francs.

Rochambeau divided the 100,000 Louis d'or in his army chest with Washington. The united army crossed the Hudson at King's Ferry, Washington leaving 3000 men on the left bank to cover West Point, the French taking position on the lower Hudson, as if for an attack on New York, but soon moving to the Delaware, passing it at Trenton, going through Philadelphia, where Congress reviewed it.

The library of the Historical Society has a copy of a rare book, an abridged translation of the *Memoirs of the Marshal Count de Rochambeau*, by M. W. E. Wright, published in Paris in 1838, giving that part of the French original dealing with his American campaigns. The English of this translation and the queer mistakes in names of men and places make this a very curious performance; it does not seem to have invited any

attention to Rochambeau's *Memoirs* or to the broader subject of the French forces in America, since then so fully and ably discussed by the late Mr. Balch in his various elaborate studies of the material he gathered in Paris. In that treasure house of information on the subject, Doniol's *Histoire de la Participation de la France à l'Etablissement des États Unis d'Amerique*, Rochambeau's name and deeds are frequently recorded. Chosen to command a descent on the English coast, for his services in the Seven Years' War had made him preëminent for an independent expedition, he was suddenly called from the Château de Rochambeau, where he had just gone to take possession on the death of his father. He was assigned to the leadership of the force sent to America. He was in consultation with La Fayette as to its details. His instructions are printed in the seventh volume of Sparks' *Washington*, where the letters from Washington to Rochambeau, both in this country and after his return to Europe, show the close ties that bound the two in life-long friendship. La Fayette was full of zeal and ambition, and acting as intermediary between Washington and Rochambeau, was at the outset unwilling to defer to the prudence and experience of the elder soldier, but in the end all worked together harmoniously with the best results. Rochambeau treated La Fayette with fraternal tenderness, and even in criticising his impetuous plans, spoke of himself as "le vieux père qui parle à son cher fils." When Washington and Rochambeau met for the first time at Hartford, the former had Knox and La Fayette with him; the latter Ternay, Chastellux, Fersen, Damas, Mathieu Dumas. The results of the interview were entrusted to the younger Rochambeau, who sailed in a ship commanded by La Perouse, to seek in France additional help, men, money and ships. Chastellux and Mathieu Dumas both printed their accounts of their life in America, the former in 1786, the latter not until 1839, but both show that France and indeed all Europe were closely following events in America. Washington naturally deferred to the older soldier, but Rochambeau loyally sought to do all he could to assist both in perfecting plans for military operations and in making them successful by the prompt use of all the means at hand. The fifth volume of Doniol gives the letters of Rochambeau to the French War Department, from his accepting the command until he returned to France; it includes copies of his correspondence with Washington and with de La Luzerne, the French Minister in Philadelphia. In his letter accepting his appointment, he recalls his experience in the battles of Laufeldt, Crefeld and Closter-camp, and his reasons for a force large enough for all the contingencies of a war in a distant country. Undoubtedly to him is due the fact of later reinforcements of men and ships as well as liberal advances of money. Besides reproducing portraits of Rochambeau from Trumbull, Doniol gives in his fifth volume a portrait owned by the family, from a miniature in their possession. Of the son I know of no portrait in this country, although there is a very good one at the Château de Rochambeau, that might with advantage be reproduced to add to the growing gallery of men of note in our history.

In Scharf and Westcott's *History of Philadelphia*, Vol. i, p. 414, there is a record of the visit on August 30, 1781, of Washington and Rochambeau. They were received by the Light Horse and escorted to the city tavern and thence to the house of Robert Morris, on Market street, between Fifth and Sixth. At three o'clock they proceeded to the State House, and paid their respects to Congress, after which they returned to Mr. Morris', where they dined in company with Samuel Huntingdon, the President of Congress, Gens. Knox, Moultrie and other distinguished officers. In the evening the city was illuminated.

Mr. Westcott, in his *History of Philadelphia*, says that they dined with the President of Congress [of the State ?], Thomas McKean. In the afternoon the vessels in the Delaware displayed their flags and fired salutes. On September 3 and 4, the French Army marched through the city. Their route was down Front and Second street, and past the State House, where Thomas McKean, as President of the United States, being Chief Officer of Congress, dressed in black velvet, and sword by his side, his head covered, reviewed them, receiving the honors due to a sovereign. On his left were Washington and Rochambeau, uncovered, and on his right the Chevalier de la Luzerne, the French Minister. After the ceremonies, President McKean sent a formal letter to Count Rochambeau, expressing the satisfaction of himself and of Congress at the brilliant appearance and exact discipline of the several corps.

The regiment Soissonais was exercised on the commons on September 4, in the presence of Congress, the French Minister and the Generals, and 20,000 spectators. The regiment had four field pieces, and went through all the evolutions of a skirmish, to the delight and satisfaction of the vast crowd. On July 15, 1782, Washington and Rochambeau attended the fête given by the French Minister at his residence in Philadelphia to 1500 guests, in honor of the birthday of the Dauphin of France. His house was near Sixth and Chestnut streets, where in the evening there were fireworks on the large lot on Chestnut street opposite the Minister's residence. Mr. Gérard was elected a member of the Philosophical Society in 1779, following other illustrious Frenchmen on its rolls, Condorcet, Daubenton, Barbeu Dubourg, Le Roux, Reynall, Lavoisier, Rozier, and in turn followed by Luzerne, Marbois, La Fayette, Chastellux, Vergennes, Guichen, Rochefoucauld, Cabanis, Brissot de Warville, Du Pont de Nemours, and all of these have made their mark on both sides the ocean. Thus the Philosophical Society began its admirable method of recognition of those who have rendered great public service both in the old world and in the new.

Washington and La Fayette reached Williamsburg September 14, and found there La Fayette strongly posted. Barras brought the siege guns by water, and then took Viomesnil and his troops from Annapolis to Jamestown, where the whole army was united by September 26. On the 28th the siege of Yorktown was begun, de Grasse landing 600 men from his fleet to assist the land operations. The American Army was on the

right, the French on the centre and left. On October 19, Cornwallis surrendered with 8000 men, 214 guns and 22 flags. On the 27th an English fleet of 27 sail came to Cape Henry, but it was too late. The French took possession of the British quarters at Yorktown, Gloucester, Hampton and Williamsburg. Later they rejoined Washington at King's Ferry on the Hudson. Returning to France, Rochambeau was received with honor by the King, and, with other French officers who had served with him, was meted out decorations and promotions. It was on his return from Yorktown that here in Philadelphia, as he tells us in his *Memoirs*, of all the honors paid him, none touched him more than an address presented to him by a deputation of Quakers, old men in costumes that he characterizes as quaint from their simplicity, who thanked him, not for his military success, of which they told him they had no admiration, but because of his being the friend of mankind, and for the perfect order and discipline of his soldiers, and he records with satisfaction the fact that in the three campaigns he had made in America, there was not a single instance of any quarrel between soldiers of the French Army and those of the American Army, a record honorable alike to the soldiers of both nationalities, officers and enlisted men, too. It is eminently characteristic of the man that in this hour of glory he interceded on behalf of De Grasse and secured for him a return to the King's favor.

Rochambeau in his *Memoirs* gives a glowing account of the resources of the country, and says he thought the United States could some day have a population of thirty millions or more. He made a short visit to England and was received most cordially, meeting many of Cornwallis' officers on a very friendly footing. At the outbreak of the French Revolution he had both civil and military duties forced on him, and was given the command of the Army of the North. He was the last Marshal of France appointed by Louis the XVI, and Napoleon in confirming this distinction put him first on the list of his Marshals. Forced by ill health to give up his command, he retired to his Château, was arrested and sent to prison by Robespierre, and after nine months' confinement, barely escaping the guillotine, was released without trial, and indeed without formal charges of any kind. His son was sent to the West Indies, where he was as successful as possible under the most disadvantageous conditions, but finally was made a prisoner of war by the English. Paroled by them, he paid a visit to Washington, and was received by him with every honor. After eighteen months he was exchanged, and that for Gen. O'Hara, one of the English officers captured at Yorktown. He again returned to France, and was appointed Governor-General of San Domingo. The father congratulated Berthier, who had served under him in America, on his appointment as Napoleon's Chief of Staff, and was presented to Napoleon, who wanted to make him a senator, an honor which he declined on the score of age and bad health, but he was made Grand Officer of the Legion of Honor. The son was sent back to France as a prisoner by his own rebellious subordinates, and the father went to Paris to defend him against charges

made by his enemies, but the son was again a prisoner in England, in spite of the father's appeal to Cornwallis to remember his release on parole at Yorktown. The younger Rochambeau finally returned to France, was made General of Division, and lost his life at the battle of Leipsic, in 1813. The father had died in 1807, and a grandson, a young cavalry officer of great promise, praised by Davoust and promoted to a staff position, lost his leg in the same engagement, and was thus compelled to return to civil life. He lived and died at Rochambeau, and the stately Château is rich in relics of these three generations of gallant soldiers and of many ancestors of distinction in both civil and military life. The present Marquis de Rochambeau, himself no mean scholar in history and archeology, has printed an interesting little volume of sketches written by the younger General de Rochambeau during the last years of the eighteenth century, and when he was a prisoner of war in England between 1803 and 1811 ; they are drawn from his personal knowledge of the men and events hastily described—Danton, Robespierre, Barrère, Carnot, Brissot, Montesquieu, Custines, Biron, Pichegru, among them not a few who had served with the French Army in the American War of Independence, and some of whom achieved great distinction under Napoleon. It is curious to find that Gen. de Rochambeau suggests that the Duke of Kent be sent to command in Nova Scotia, in the hope that the dissatisfied party in the United States might find in him a possible candidate for President, making the office hereditary. As the elder Rochambeau had suggested to a Brunswick Prince the possibility of founding an empire in America, so the younger Rochambeau believed that the English Government had an idea that Americans still cherished a secret affection for the house of Hanover.

The Marquis de Rochambeau has printed, too, several valuable archeological works and an account of the Château de Rochambeau. He calls attention to the curious rock grottoes on the hillsides around it, the work of more than twenty centuries back, for he traces them to the Celts, and has found evidences of their handiwork, ancient dwelling places of the very earliest dwellers in the region, and their burial places, too, for skeletons of great antiquity, and other evidences of Druidical worship of the third century, have been found there. The estates were in the family from the eleventh to the twelfth century, and the deeds and other muniments of title have been preserved from the fifteenth century, beginning in 1486, although members of the family are known to have taken part in the Crusades, one of them under St. Louis of France falling in battle in Egypt in 1251, while another in return for his services in a campaign in Italy was granted as motto for his shield the device : "*Vivre en preux y mourir.*"

From 1516 the Château and estate of Rochambeau gave the name borne by the family, and among them some were distinguished in the wars of the League, others in the navy, one under Jean Bart was made Commodore in 1741, and another Governor of Vendôme was succeeded in that office

by his son, who commanded the French forces in the American War of Independence, and later on became Marshal of France. The Château itself dates from the twelfth or thirteenth century. It was originally surrounded by walls and flanked with towers. It was rebuilt by Marshal de Rochambeau in the style of his time, and all that recalled the feudal castle disappeared to make room for the architecture of the period. The towers were demolished, but so solid were the foundations that even now when the water of the Loire is clear the old massive stones on which they rested can be seen. Now the Château is a large main central building with two wings. These are comparatively modern, but the main body is of very old construction, with massive walls, secret passages and a hidden entrance to what were once the dungeon keep and underground prisons. In face of the main entrance a graceful modern chapel has been constructed, hollowed out of the soft rock. On one side a great series of stables and other houses, on the other the long line of very ancient caves, still used for farm purposes, in which the archeological zeal and intelligence of the present owner have unearthed many curious relics of its successive occupants, from those of the stone age, through Gallic and Roman days down to historic periods quite within our own memory. Indeed so vast are these artificial caves, that in one of the largest, a whole troop of cavalry were quartered during the recent French military manœuvres at Châteaudun, horses and men numbering nearly a hundred each, being easily accommodated in these roomy, high, airy, dry, well-lighted and well-ventilated natural dwellings. Where once the crenelated walls of the Château commanded the Loire, there are now broad terraces and flights of steps and grassy banks leading to the edge of the river; on either side of the Château fine gardens, and beyond the river broad meadows planted with fine trees in the style of an English park, so much affected in France in the last century, while a splendid avenue of a mile or two leads from the house between the river on one side and the series of rock caves on the other, to the high road leading to Vendôme, all in admirable preservation, and in striking contrast to the flat plain that surrounds the famous Château de Chambord, and the typical straight lines of small trees that are so frequent throughout Touraine, depriving even its historical châteaux of the beauty of the simple Château de Rochambeau. The present Marquis de Rochambeau, in his interesting monograph on the Château and its vicinity, gives a series of early charters, from the seventh to the thirteenth century, for churches and properties now included in its grounds, and the gift of the ground itself under the name of Rochambeau in 1486, the will of the first owner of the present family in 1598, the deed of the establishment of its chapel in 1633, and other interesting papers drawn from the family archives and from local and other public depositories of ancient records. These monographs, that of the younger General de Rochambeau, and that of the present owner of the Château, are in the library of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, which already has on its shelves the *Memoirs* of the Count de Rochambeau,

the Commander of the French Allied Troops in the War of American Independence, and the archeological writings of the present owner are in the library of the American Philosophical Society. I am very sure that the present owners of the Château will be glad to know that the name of Rochambeau is still borne in honor and affection in this country. The official papers of Rochambeau as Commander of the French Army in this country have very properly been obtained by the Government of the United States, and are now safely deposited in Washington, where no doubt they will be made accessible to students of American history. His private papers are still preserved in the family Château, where he lived and died, and it would be very interesting if his correspondence with those he left there, during his service in this country, could be made public, for we should have from a man of large experience his judgment and opinions of the American patriots and statesmen and soldiers with whom he was in daily communication, and we should know how this old French nobleman and soldier was impressed by the country and the people. His printed *Memoirs* are very favorable in every thing he says of the country and of its people, but they deal in generalities after the fashion of the day. No doubt they give rather his general impressions as he transmitted them by word of mouth to a literary man, who really edited them to suit his own views of how biography ought to be written, than with any fidelity to the plain speech of the old soldier, whose experiences in a long life must have been so wide and so varied. No doubt, too, after the rough usage of the French Revolution, with actual imprisonment and the threat of the guillotine, he looked back on his stay in America, at the head of a well-disciplined and well-equipped force of old soldiers, surrounded by officers who represented the flower of the French aristocracy in its best estate, as a period of great expectations, more than realized by the prosperity of the infant Republic, in great contrast to the violent changes in France, the sad days of the declining monarchy, its violent overthrow, the stormy days of the French Revolution, its excesses, and the strong measures by which Napoleon reëstablished the heavy hand of military power in France and over Europe, and the brilliant years of his empire after its first proclamation. When the elder Rochambeau died, Napoleon was at the very zenith of his power, and when the younger Rochambeau fell at Leipsic, Napoleon's star was still in the ascendant. It would be most gratifying to learn whether their private correspondence and family and other papers are still preserved, and to have them printed, if not in full, at least at sufficient length to give to the growing army of American historical students a better knowledge of the Rochambeaus as they lived and thought, and of their opinions of the men of the new country to whose future greatness they had contributed so largely. That they came of old historic and military stock, tracing its home back to Celtic days, and their family to ancestral Crusaders, made them all the more helpful for the Republic of the New World.

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